

Eric and the Öresund Lamp

Book Two

Back to School

August 15, 2001

By Theodor Christianson

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Dedication

For Tobias my son, editor and literary critic, and for Pia, my wife, sponsor and guide. I would not have started writing this book, if it had not been for their inspiration and support. Thanks guys.

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Dramatis Personae

In order of appearance

Eric Emberson

Has to begin teaching a Genie, but how?

Jeeny (Jasmine Elvira Elvensdotter Novina Yggdrasil)

Genie apprentice, can see the future but still has a lot to learn about the present.

Sylvia Martens

Patrick's little sister, she knows there is a Genie around somewhere

Patrick Martens

Eric's best buddy, has his hands full with keeping his sister's curiosity at bay.

Anita Emberson

Would like to find out more about Jeannie, Eric's secret new girl friend. Or was Jeannie just an imaginary friend?

Henrik Emberson

Does not understand why Eric wants to hang on to that old, beaten-up laptop.

Sven Vitkäpp

Retired veterinarian doctor in Lund. Owns an old metal chest but has no idea what is in it.

Jemmy (Johan Elvensson Magnus Moonshadow Yggdrasil)

Jeeny's younger brother, sleeping in an old book of magic to wait until his sister calls him.

Rudy (the rude) VanDerClaas

Eric's archenemy, class-bully. Still keen on having his revenge on Eric.

Chapter 1

An unexpected visit...

„Cool, cool, cool, cool ..“ Eric Emberson kept repeating the same words in his mind over and over again. *“A genie. In a magic lamp. Right here in my room. And I’m her master. Cool, cool, cool, cool ...”* Eric kept staring at the beat up, ancient fish-oil lamp he had brought back from his trip to the National Museum of History in Copenhagen. He still could not believe it. Even when he and his best friend Patrick Martens had jumped back on the bus that would bring them back from Copenhagen to their hometown of Lund in Sweden, it all had seemed to unreal to believe. The bus had been packed with people and Eric and Patrick had not dared to talk about Jeeny, let alone call her out of her lamp during the seemingly endless 90-minute trip back to Strandvägen, where they lived. When they had arrived back in Lund, they had walked back to their homes, discussing what to do next. Now that they had a Genie, albeit a young, untrained one, they would be able to do all kinds of neat things. Especially with that Future-Eye trick of Jeeny’s, that allowed her to see images of the future. Eric and Patrick decided to be very careful. To take it one step at a time. Eric would store the lamp in his room, and they would tell their parents that their trip to Copenhagen had been very successful. That they had found an old oil lamp, and that they were sure it contained a Genie. Nobody would believe them anyway. The full frontal truth trick usually worked with their parents and with Sylvia, Patrick’s little sister. Now Eric was in his room, staring at the lamp containing Jeeny, short for Jasmine Elvira Elvensdotter Novina Yggdrasil, 3000-year prisoner of the Öresund lamp, 10-year old Genie apprentice, and now personal magical assistant to Eric Emberson. *“Cool”*, Eric thought. He just could not stop himself from repeating the same words. He thought back. It had all started with Eric’s old laptop computer acting strangely, showing mysterious rhyming riddle messages on the screen when Eric was just expecting the familiar screens of BattleZone 3000, his favorite computer game. Initially he had thought the messages were part of the game, but Patrick and Eric had then quickly found out that the messages seemed to tell

them something about the future. Thanks to Patrick's superior detective mind and thanks to a hint from Patrick's little sister they had come up with the theory that the messages could have been sent by a genie. A genie inside a bottle or inside of a magic lamp. It had seemed too weird to believe. But then Eric and Patrick had been able to make a narrow escape from an ambush laid by his archenemy Rudy (the Rude) VanDerClaas and his henchmen. By correctly interpreting another one of the rhyming riddle messages, that had told them to take another route to school. Because the message contained information about the school that not even Patrick's dad had known, both Eric and Patrick had begun to take their own theory seriously. They must have found a Genie, or the Genie had somehow found them. Eric and Patrick had teamed up to find out more, had done the research and found out that several ancient artifacts, including a old oil-lamp had indeed been found in the Öresund bridge building site a few years ago. That the lamp was probably stored in the National Museum of History in Copenhagen, and that it was probably possible to get the lamp if the museum had no further use for it. Especially if they did not tell the Museum everything they knew, or suspected about the lamp. Eric and Patrick had not really believed that they would find the lamp, or that they would be able to pull off the trick to be able to take the lamp home. But it had worked. The full-frontal-truth-trick had worked. As a matter of fact -and Eric was still grinning about that all the time- they had told Carl Olsen, the janitor responsible for the storage room where the lamp was stored, only the truth and nothing but the truth. That he and Patrick were looking for an old oil-lamp because there was a 3000-year old Genie locked inside. Carl Olsen, the Museum's janitor, had listened to the story, wide-eyed, had just continued staring at them, and had then begun to laugh so hard that his whole, huge body had shaken like a bowl of Jello. But Carl had shown them to the storage room, nonetheless, and had left them alone to begin their search for the Genie lamp. At first sight, the room had looked way to big to find anything. But then. The unlikely, no the impossible had happened. In order to get a little more light into the room, to have a better chance at finding the lamp, Eric had picked up an old beaten-up oil-lamp standing on one of the first shelves. The lamp had looked kind of funny. It seemed that Carl had converted the old fish-oil lamp into a make

shift electrical lamp by adding a simple light bulb at the front end, and by connecting an extension cord to the back end of the lamp. When looking at the strange contraption a bit closer, Eric had noticed a strange engraving. In ancient looking letters, reminding Eric very much of Runic script. And thank goodness Eric had learned how to read that script in school. "Yggdra" it had said. Eric had rubbed off some of the grime and dust with his thumb to see the engraving more clearly. The cleaning had revealed 3 more letters: S, I and L. Now it had said "Yggdrasil". Eric said "Yggdrasil" and out had popped Jeeny, the Genie. Eric was still getting goose bumps just thinking about the time when he was holding his breath, trying to make up what to say to Carl, trying to think of a good trick to somehow make Carl Olsen let them take the lamp home. He had almost fainted with excitement. But then his best friend Patrick, universal master brain, had saved the day again. Using his clear thinking that had made Patrick an ace in math and science, Patrick had convinced the janitor that the lamp was really not very valuable, that it would make a good model of the actual Genie-lamp they were looking for, that it would help them to make a good drawing of what a real Genie-lamp might look like, in short: that it was in much better hands with them. Carl had agreed. He had given them the lamp as a gift, as a thank-you, because the kids had made him laugh so much. But then! The wait! How long the time had seemed when they had had to sit in Carl's office, drinking one peach ice tea after the other until it had finally been time for them to catch the 5:25 bus back to Lund. Finally they had been able to say farewell to Carl. They had grabbed their backpacks and had left the Museum, laughing, jumping with joy as soon as Carl had been out of sight. They had jumped on the bus, minds busy with making plans. Eric, that much had been clear, would be the owner and master of the Genie. The lamp would be in his room. But Patrick would be second master, with unlimited visitation rights, so to speak. Eric had set up the lamp on one of his three bookshelves, had waited for bedtime and had begun his Genie-instructions. Both Jeeny and Eric would have so much to learn from each other. And now, three days later, that very lamp, with Jeeny the Genie-apprentice inside, was still sitting on his bookshelf. And Eric still could not fully believe he was not dreaming all of this. To hide the true nature of the lamp, Eric had plugged the lamp in. The thin,

white extension cable that Carl Olsen had fitted on the back of the lamp was plugged into the wall outlet, and the little electric bulb that Carl had screwed into a socket in the front of the lamp was emitting a yellowish cone of light. It looked very weird, but it worked, and his parents had bought the story that the lamp had been a souvenir that Carl had given them. *A genie. In a magic lamp. Right here in my room. And I'm her master. Cool, cool, cool, cool ...*"

"Eric," his mom Anita called from upstairs.

"Yeah?," Eric responded. "*Probably dinnertime*", he thought.

"Dinner will be ready in ten minutes, Eric. Don't forget to wash your hands and to switch off the light downstairs."

"I'll be right there, mom", Eric shouted back. "*Ten minutes? Plenty of time for one more little chit chat with Jeeny*" Eric thought. He walked over to the bookshelf, took the lamp into his left hand, rubbed it with the thumb of his right hand and quietly said "Yggdrasil". A few seconds later he was looking at the familiar, slightly chubby face of Jeeny, hovering in front of him, half-transparent, smiling. Eric had gotten used to the fact that Jeeny looked a little bit like a ghost, not like a real person. After all, Jeeny was just a Genie-apprentice. She did not have full powers yet. And Eric was not a real magician. As a matter of fact, he was no magician at all. Otherwise Eric would have been able to completely free Jeeny from her imprisonment, conjure up a full body for her, give her some of his magic dust and start her on the completion of her education. But Eric was going to help Jeeny anyway, the best he could. He smiled back at Jeeny and whispered: "Hi there, I have to go up and eat dinner with my mom and dad. But I will be back down in 30 minutes, okay?"

"Yes, Eric", said Jeeny. The disappointment was clearly showing through in the tone of her voice. "I was looking forward to speaking to you again. I don't know how long 30 minutes is on my Time Crystal, but I'll just wait until you return, master. I am used to waiting."

Eric sighed. Talking to Jeeny had been a little bit difficult from the start. After all, in addition to being a Genie apprentice, Jeeny was also a 10-year old girl from 3000 years ago, and did not know very much about modern things like watches, minutes and a lot of other things that 10-year-olds took for granted these days. But Jeeny had been a quick learner so far, and it would become easier to talk to her all the time. Eric had already learned from Jeeny that the people of her day and age had called days “sun cycles”. Months were called “moon cycles” and a year was counted as 12 moon cycles, pretty much like today. But Eric had not had time yet to discuss hours and minutes with Jeeny. He felt that he needed to explain that to her somehow, but he did not quite know how. Eric decided to call Patrick, the math genius, who never failed in explaining anything complicated to Eric using the 1-2-3 method. He ran upstairs, grabbed the mobile phone, collected an impatient set of eye brows from his mom “I’ll be right up, Mom” and sprinted downstairs. He dialled, got Patrick on the line and quickly explained the situation to him, breathlessly.

“Hey Patrick, I have a problem, I need your help with. You have a minute?”, Eric asked.

“Sure, relax, what’s wrong? Did someone steal the lamp?”

“No, no, but it’s about Jeeny anyway.”

”Okay then, I have about one minute, exactly, dinner is waiting.”

“I know, same here, but need to explain to Jeeny how much time 30 minutes is. She only counts in Sun Cycles, which is their way of saying one day. I have asked her to wait 30 minutes, but she has no idea how long that is!”

“Okay, just give me a second”, Patrick responded.

Patrick did the math in his head. After about 30 seconds, he said to Eric:

“It’s easy. It’s like this. (1) You have asked Jeeny to wait for 30 minutes, which is the same as half an hour. (2) A day has 24 hours and 24 hours multiplied by two gives you the number of half hours in a day, right? So. (3) If a day has 48 half hours, then a human half hour relates to the 48th part of Jeeny’s Sun Cycles. But no need to be picky. Just tell her that 30 minutes is one 50th of a Sun Cycle. Okay”?

“Okay, a 50th, thanks buddy”, Eric said and hung up. He had not quite understood, but he decided to tell Jeeny anyway, maybe Jeeny would understand. So Eric said, now even more insecure than before he had called Patrick. “Look Jeeny, Patrick and I have worked it out. We think that 30 minutes is the same amount of time as a 50th part of your full Sun Cycle. Your Time Crystal shows a full Sun Cycle, right?”

“Yes, master”, Jeeny answered, thinking hard. She was actually completely confused by the explanation Eric had given her. What was a Fifty-F and how would that explain the duration of 30 minutes? “*But*”, she thought, “*we are still working on words and phrases. These kind of word puzzles are quite normal between master and Genie in the beginning. One has to be patient with Masters, her aunt Novina had said.* So Jeeny decided to explain the time system of the Yggdrasil clan to Eric again:

“Look Master, any Time Crystal always shows one Sun Cycle. Then, at the end of the day, when all the sand has fallen to the bottom of the Crystal, the Time Crystal turns upside down and it begins counting on the next Cycle. Each Sun Cycle is divided into 5 equal parts. Two for the early part of the day, one for the middle part of the day, and two for the later parts of the day. We call these parts hands of time, or just hands. So, right now, we’re in the 4th hand, because it’s dinner time. Each hand is divided into 5 equal parts again. These parts are called fingers of time, or just fingers. Because it’s early in the 4th hand, we’re probably in the 1st finger of the 4th hand. So, one Sun Cycle is either counted as 5 hands of time or as 25 fingers of time, you see? It’s actually quite simple. Your explanation was quite difficult for me to understand. I do not know

what a “fifty F” is. So, can you tell me in how many hands or fingers you are coming back, Master?”

Eric thought: “*Argghh, this is even more complicated than Patrick’s explanation!*” But then he thought about what Jeeny had said, and figured out that the 25 fingers in a day of Jeeny’s world were not that different from the 24 hours in a day in his world. So he said to himself: “*Aha, fingers are not too different from our hours!*”

“What did you say, Master? I did not quite understand” Jeeny asked.

Eric repeated his conclusion, this time in a louder voice: “I think I got it. Your Time Crystal counts 25 fingers in a cycle; and we have 24 hours in a day. That’s about the same. So, half an hour is about half a finger of time then, got it? I’ll be back in half a finger”

“Sure master, I understand now. That is not very long at all. I’ll see you soon, then!” Jeeny replied.

Eric said “Okay, see you later” and then “Yggdrasil” and watched how Jeeny disappeared into the lamp. He put the lamp back onto the bookshelf, went to the bathroom to wash his hands, switched of the light in his room, and hurried up to join his parents for dinner. He was curious what kind of vegetable he was going to be forced to eat today. Anita seemed to have an unending supply of green, red and sometimes yellow vegetables he had never seen, let alone eaten in his life before.

Jeeny was pulled back into the lamp. She actually really hated that feeling. It reminded her too much of that awful stretching, pulling, tearing sensation she had felt 3000 years ago when the Universal Council of Wizards, Witches, Druids, Genies and Other Related Magical Arts - in short the UCWWDGORMA, had put a spell on her and banned her into this oil lamp. Now she was back in that wretched little cave that had been her home for 3 millennia. She looked at the EverFire, still glowing in the same, faint purple light, then at the Time Crystal, slowly counting out her time, one sand corn after the other. What had Eric said? 30 minutes? About the 50th

part of a sun cycle? 30 minutes were about one half of a time finger? She would have to remember that. She did not feel like doing the exact calculation in her head right now. Counting and numbers had not been one of her favorites in Genie-school. But half a finger was okay. It would not be that long of a wait, compared to 3000 years of boredom, but Jeeny decided to use her “Bore-Gone” spell anyway. She said:

Cadabrium, bore, snore, ignore
this Crystal here I do implore,
speed up my time, just be so kind
so I don't loose my little mind.
Make time fly by, until I say
Muirbadac take speed away.

Jeeny had invented the Bore-Gone spell herself about 2997 years ago, not long after she had first arrived in the lamp. She had known right away that she would probably need some special magic to not go completely crazy with boredom. This was the special skill that none of the other Genie apprentices had had: the ability to make up new spells and tricks. All the other Genie-apprentices in school had just been able to repeat the same old boring magic, and only if their masters or teachers had asked them to do so. But not Jeeny. She knew how to make new magic, and she could use it whenever she wanted, just like the masters in the UCWWDGORMA. The first spell she had made up, the Future-Eye trick, the ability to see into the future, had been totally new. What Jeeny did not know then, and could only guess now, was that the masters had tried to perfect this trick centuries ago and had not been able to get any good results. Even the most powerful masters had only been able to see a few blurry visions. And these images had only shown them extremely confusing things: Things like people sitting in shiny, 4-wheeled metal boxes which moved much faster than horse carriages. Things like metal birds the size of dragon boats racing through the sky at lightning speed and making thunder sounds. Or things like small square boxes with glass windows that showed flickering, moving pictures of people dressed in very weird colors. The masters had been sure, then. The Future-Eye spell was magic of the worst kind: the dark kind. The kind of magic the old immortals like Tantor had been able to use. The confused visions the Masters had been receiving almost certainly had nothing do with the real future. Nothing at all. These images could only have been produced by an unknown, and very powerful, dark force. And the masters had had no intention of going down that path. Anything to do with the dark side of magic was hidden, forbidden and outlawed. So the

UCWWDGORMA had banned the Future-Eye spell, had destroyed all the pages and books containing the exact words of the chant needed to invoke the spell, and had even made it a high crime against the magic code of conduct, punishable by immediate exile, to attempt such a trick ever again. All the UCWWDGORMA members in the real had been informed by means of a number of appropriately scary nightmares. It had seemed to work. Nothing happened for a few hundred years. Most of the masters had even forgotten how to say the basic spell, the books had been burned, and no one in the council spent much time thinking about the Future-Eye trick any more. And none of the normal Wizards, Witches, Genies, Druids and other related magical artists would even dare to break the magic code of magic. But the old masters had forgotten something. It had not even occurred to them that a young child might try, let alone succeed with such a trick. Then one day, one horrible, dark, dark day, the 12 Masters had found out about Jeeny. That Jeeny had learned the Future-Eye trick, had used it, had been able to do better than the supreme masters. At age 10! That Jeeny had been able to see images of the future AND that she was able to receive some kind of explanation for the images through rhyming riddles. This had surprised, shocked, enraged and even scared the UCWWDGORMA Masters. As a matter of fact, it had frightened them so much that they had immediately decided to ban Jeeny into the prison of the copper lamp. This is what had happened. At least, that is what Jeeny thought must have happened. There was no other explanation for the cruel and instantaneous way she had been yanked away from her life and locked into this cave of copper. Jeeny had spent the first few days of her imprisonment to think about what had happened, to think about ways of escaping her fate. But she had soon realized that she would be locked in here for a long, long time, until she would be set free by E of E, or until her maybe not so eternal EverFire had ran out. But she did not want to give up hope. She wanted to see the day when she would be able to leave this prison. To be finally free again and to be able to have her revenge on those that had done this to her. She had desperately wanted a spell to speed up time. So she used all of her time and energy in the first few moon cycles of her exile to combine the 147 spells she had been taught in Genie-school in completely new ways. By adding new words, by changing

the sequence of sentences, by saying the spells backwards, by trying new Magic words. She had finally come up with the magic word Cadabrium: a simple variation of the good old Cadabra that was used in so many other, more ordinary spells. And .. why had she not thought about that earlier? ... Cadabrium was the exact reverse of the magic word Muirbadac, which could be used with any old Time Crystal to slow down time. Using the Cadabrium word, she had been able to make up her second, personal trick which she had called the Bore-Gone spell. Whenever she was bored with practicing spells or with looking into the future, she used Bore-Gone to make the time pass more quickly. It was very, very useful. The longer she let the spell run, the faster time seemed to fly by. Right now, Jeeny could already see the sand corns of the Time Crystal dropping to the bottom of the hollow crystal much more quickly than before. Good. Faster time was goodness. For now. In here. But she much preferred to be outside, really. To learn more about Eric's world. To understand the funny words Eric kept using. Words like "larmklok", "popkorn", "laptopkomputa", "kar", "baik", "kikbord", "gaimboi", teevee, "chearios", "Teeschirt", "frenchfrys", "sokka", "popsikkl", and many more. She had not said much to Eric about this, but she would really need to learn about these things if she was going to be of any use to her new master. But to learn more, she would have to find a way to stay outside of the lamp more often. Time would not be big problem then. Once she was outside, Jeeny was sure she would be able to use Muirbadac to slow down time enough to learn everything she needed to learn. There would be no risk of discovery. After all, only Eric and Patrick were able to see her and to hear her thought language. That was the limit of her magic. Being seen and being heard. Anything else did not work on the outside world. Yet! Jeeny thought. She was really curious if, no how soon, she could get some of her spells to work in Eric's world. Even though he had no magic dust to give to her. She would have to try to convince Eric to keep her outside of the lamp for a while. If he refused her that right, she planned to ask Eric this question: *"Can you imagine what it feels like to be locked up in your room, with no toys, no books, no windows, no friends to play with and nothing but plenty of time? Can you?"* that would do the trick. A few seconds later, before she was able to continue that thought, she felt that funny, stretching sensation of

being pulled out of the lamp again. Obviously the 50th, the 30 minutes, the half-finger had passed already thanks to her Bore-Gone spell. Eric was done with dinner and had come back to talk to her. He had quickly forced down the evil-looking, fried, brownish “shetaaky” mushrooms. And that had saved him at least 5 minutes and earned him a surprised set of eyebrows from Anita, his mom. Jeeny reacted. She barely had time to undo the Bore-Gone spell by thinking “*Muirbadac, take speed away.*”, when her view suddenly expanded and she saw Eric again, holding the lamp in both hands.

“Hi Eric,” Jeeny said, “it’s good to see you again.”

“Hi Jeeny, did you get bored waiting for me?” Eric said, putting the lamp back onto the shelf.

“No Eric...” Jeeny laughed. “I have ways of passing the time very quickly. A 50th is nothing compared to the 3000 years I have been locked in here. Can I ask you something master?”

“Sure”, Eric replied. “After all I have asked you a lot of questions, so it’s only fair if you can ask some questions, too. What is it?”

“Well...” Jeeny said. She had to be careful now, to find the right words. “I would like to be able to serve you better. But I simply don’t know enough about your world. All these words you are using are very confusing to me, and some of the things I am speaking of seem to be strange to you. So I thought, it would be a good idea if I could be outside of the lamp more. There really is no risk. Only you and Patrick can see me in the first place and I will not be able to go very far, because I still need the EverFire to feed me. So, what do you say, Master?”

Eric thought about this. He had heard the ding-dong of the upstairs doorbell, followed by the sound of the door opening and the voice of his mom and some other girl or woman, but he had decided to ignore it. Eric actually had nothing against Jeeny being out for a bit more often. Maybe he could switch on the TV so she could watch the educational programs and learn more about today’s world. It

would be very useful to have a Genie that understood more. Eric decided to allow Jeeny to stay out, but he had to ask her how long was enough, when she had to go back inside to get energy from the EverFire and things like that. He opened his mouth to give Jeeny his decision when he heard the trallop-trallop of feet scurrying down the staircase. "*Probably Patrick*", Eric thought and turned to exchange the clan-shake, fist-fist-elbow-fist, with his best buddy. But when he turned around he was in for a huge shock. Instead of Patrick, he saw Sylvia, Patrick's curious little sister, rushing into his room wearing the determined expression of a 6 and a half-year old on a mission. "*Oh no..*", Eric thought, "*She is up to something! Why did my Mom let her in?*" Bu then he reconsidered. This would be a good test for Jeeny being outside. Eric just hoped that Jeeny was truly invisible, even to 6 and a half-year olds with a very strong imagination. So Eric just smiled and said:

"Hi Sylvia, what can I do for you?"

Sylvia walked up to him, planted both feet squarely on the ground, put her hands into her hips, and started her obviously well prepared speech.

"I know you and Patrick have brought back something fun from Copenhagen. I want to know what it is. Right now. I think it is a magic lamp with a Genie inside and you two want to keep the Genie just to yourself. I think that is no fair. Even your mom agrees with me."

"Uh oh, now what", Eric thought. He glanced at Jeeny. She just shrugged and said, in thought language: "*I can't do anything, Eric*" Eric was busy trying to come up with a good story for Sylvia when things became even more complicated. Anita and Henrik, Eric's parents had come down, too. They were standing by the door, clearly interested in what was going on down here. After all, Eric did not get that many female visitors, and this had been the first time Sylvia had come over after dinnertime to ask for a "private and urgent" meeting with Eric. Eric's brain turned into jello. He could not think of what to say. He surely could not lie. First of all, he had promised his mom to never lie, and secondly, him mom

knew him that well, she would know immediately if he was not telling the absolute truth. “*Where is Patrick?*”, Eric thought. “*I need his detective brain, now!*” But Patrick obviously had no idea what was going on, he was probably at home playing BattleZone 3000.

“Ehhh ...” Eric said. It was hard to get Jello-brain to say anything more meaningful.

“Ha!” Sylvia said, pointing at the lamp, which was standing in Eric’s bookshelf, right next to the box with the Book-on-tape series “*Magic stories through the Ages*” that Eric had borrowed from the school library. “I knew it, there it is”, Sylvia continued and walked over to the lamp. Jeeny was clearly getting a kick out of this, her smile had broadened and she was laughing quietly. Eric hoped nobody could hear her. He had asked Jeeny to be invisible and “inhearable” when he had first freed her. But he had never tried this out. He looked at his mom and dad. “Pheew” he thought. Nobody seemed to notice Jeeny.

“Now we shall see”, Sylvia continued with confidence. “There it is, aha, the name is engraved here, just like I thought. All I need to do now is rub the lamp and say the name of the Genie.” Eric began to smile. This was actually quite a neat way out. He just watched Sylvia go through with her plan of proving that there was a Genie hidden in the lamp.

“Yggdrasil”, Sylvia said, after she had rubbed the lamp. Quite obviously, they had taught her a bit of Runic script in school already. Jeeny complied, smiling, and disappeared back into the lamp. Eric was glad that the lamp-shaking, lamp-humming, blue-smoke-emitting part of the Genie-In and Genie-out procedure had gone away after the first few times. Sylvia looked very confused now because nothing had happened at all. She must have done something wrong. Maybe she had to say the name first, and then rub the lamp. What came first, rub or name, actually did not make a difference, but there was no way Sylvia could know this, and Eric had no plans whatsoever to let Sylvia in on his secrets just now. Sylvia repeated the routine, his time the other way around. Jeeny

popped out of the lamp, still laughing. Sylvia, now clearly looked worried by the lack of success. She said “Yggdrasil” again, this time very loudly and clearly, and rubbed the copper surface of the lamp even more vigorously. Jeeny complied, and zoomed back into the lamp. Sylvia turned around to face Eric.

“Come on, Eric, admit it, the Genie is out now, he is just invisible, right? Tell me the truth. Your mom is watching, too!” She fumed.

“Cross my heart and hope to die”, Eric said, with most solemn face he could muster. “There is no Genie out here.” He raised his right hand and made a “V” sign, like he had seen on one of the American western movies, when he judges had sworn in a witness to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. “Mom, Dad”, Eric continued, “do you see a Genie out here?” Anita and Henrik just raised their forearms into the air and shook their heads, smiling. The doorbell rang again. Anita turned around to go upstairs to check who it was. Eric hoped it was Patrick, he would know how to handle his little sister.

“Eric”, Sylvia whined, stomping her foot in defiance. “I heard you and Patrick talk about “Genie” yesterday. Don’t you think you can fool me! I’m almost seven.”

Erik had to think about this one for a while.

“Eehh...”, he stalled. Jello-brain was still no help. “*Where is Patrick*”, he thought.

“Ah, there you are sis,” Eric heard he voice of his savior. Patrick appeared in his room, exchanged a quick glance with Eric and took Sylvia by the hand. “Come on, we need to go. Mom was really worried because you had just disappeared after dinner.”

“No, Patrick”, Sylvia complained, “I need to know about the Genie. I heard you guys talk about her yesterday!”

“*Whoops*”, Patrick thought, this was getting more complicated every day now. But this time, it was Anita, Eric’s mom, who came to the rescue.

“Sylvia”, she said, “I think I can explain. Patrick and Eric are having this email-exchange with a girl called Jeannie who is planning to move here. She is 10 years old and does not know much about this place. You probably heard the boys talk about Jeannie, which surely sounds like Genie.”

“But ...” Sylvia continued, but then realized that she would not get to the bottom of this mystery today.

“Okay, let’s go big brother” she said to Patrick, who was smiling now, clearly relieved that they had gotten out of this one so easily. But then Sylvia turned around to Eric again and said: “I know you have a Genie around here somewhere, and I will prove it some day, to all of you. Hmm!”

Patrick and Sylvia got ready to leave. Patrick shot Eric another quick glance, mouthing “*talk tomorrow*”.

“Okay Eric, seems like the party is over”, Eric’s mom said, “get ready for bed and then you can read for an hour or so. But I want the lights out by 8:30 okay?”

“Sure mom”, Eric said. “Can I listen to some book tapes instead of reading?” Eric intended to spend more time with Jeeny and the sound of the book tapes would hide his whispering.

“Sure why not, just don’t turn up the tape recorder too loud, or close the door. Okay?”, his mom approved, halfway up the stairs already.

“Okay”, Eric shouted and closed the door to his room. Now that had been a visit he could easily have done without.

Chapter 2

Brother, what brother?

After he had calmed down from the excitement of Sylvia's invasion, Eric decided to continue the discussion with Jeeny from where they had been interrupted by the visit. Eric went over to the lamp, rubbed it with his arm, said "Yggdrasil" and watched Jeeny pop out of the lamp again. She was still laughing, clearly amused by the Sylvia episode.

"That was fun", Jeeny said. "Who were all these people? That girl seemed to be really smart and curious, she reminded me a bit of my little sister."

"You have siblings?" Eric said, surprised. "I did not know that. What do you think happened to them?" There was still so much he did not know about Jeeny. Jeeny's face took on a sad expression. No wonder, she had not seen them in 3000 years. "I'm sorry, Jeeny," Eric apologized, "I did not mean to make you feel sad."

"No it's all right, Eric", Jeeny said, and sighed. "I have thought about that same question at least a 100 thousand times. The answer is, I don't really know what happened to them. Since I don't have my body back, my magic does not work in your world yet. So I cannot contact my family. And even if I could, I don't know if they exist, and if they exist, how they exist, and where they exist."

"You mean, they could still be alive, after 3000 years?", Eric asked completely flabbergasted. This was getting weirder and weirder all the time. He did not even want to ask about the how and where part of Jeeny's answer at all.

"That depends", Jeeny answered. "If my brothers and sister made it to master level, they could still be around as spirits. Then they might be living in some old tree or in a silver mine, a copper mine or inside of an old book of magic, you know?" Eric nodded,

although, really, he didn't know at all. Jeeny saw the nod, took it for understanding and continued: "My mom and my dad were at the master level when I was locked in the lamp. So they are probably around here somewhere, although it will be very hard to find them. It's different for my siblings. If they have not made it to master level, they probably died 2000 years ago. Even the smartest Genies and Elves rarely get much older than 1000 years, you know?" Again Eric nodded, although it seemed to him that he knew less and less, instead of more and more. Jeeny just ploughed on with her explanation: "There is one other way though that I could see my family again, although it is pretty unlikely."

"And what is that other way?" Eric asked. He was really curious now. His nerves seemed as tense as the stings of that electric guitar his dad had given him for his 10th birthday, instead of the computer he had expected. This conversation with a 3000-year old, 10-year old was way more interesting than trying to play guitar, more educational than reading books, more fun than watching DVD's and more exciting than playing BattleZone 3000.

"Well, I don't think it happened." Jeeny explained, "but one of my kin could have locked themselves into a lamp to wait for me."

"What?" Eric shouted, eyebrows raised. This was getting wilder all the time. Eric caught his excitement, decided to lower his voice again, and continued at whisper level: "Who would do such a thing? Lock yourself into prison for 3000 years? That would be absolutely crazy!"

"Well", Jeeny said, Her face looked as if she was thinking very deeply. She continued: "Well, I guess you are right. My younger sister for example, certainly would not do that. She was so scared of caves and small places in the first place. My two older brothers would not do it either. They were already too old, much too advanced towards the graduation levels to want to miss out on the fun of finishing school and beginning their journeyman trips around the world. But Jemmy, my younger brother, he might just be crazy enough to do this."

Eric asked: “But how would Jemmy know that you had been found and freed?” Eric continued. He would ask later how old Jemmy was and what the name Jemmy really meant.

“Oh Eric, you really do not know anything about our ways, do you?” Jeeny sighed. Eric made a sour grape face, so Jeeny quickly added: “So you are a little bit like me, Eric. I don’t know much about your time either. So, we can learn from each other, agreed? It will be like going back to school for both of us, won’t it? It will be fun, Eric!”

For an instant, Eric’s face brightened, then darkened again, right away. “*Yeah right*”, Eric thought, it was a bit like going to school. Summer break was almost over now. “*Where has time gone?*”, Eric asked himself. It almost seemed that someone had made time run faster with a magic spell. But that was impossible, even for a Genie. School was going to start on Monday, three days from now. Eric would be in 5th grade this year, and probably, if his luck had not changed, he would have to face Rudy-the-Rude VanDerClaas again. Rudy would surely still carry a grudge against him. After that unplanned banana-peel ride into the fire extinguisher during Rudy’s failed attempt to beat up on Eric, Rudy had been sent into vacation three days early last school year. Sent home in disgrace with a stern warning letter from the school principal; reminding his parents, the VanDerClasses, that Rudy could soon be evicted from this school and sent to a special school for hard-to-control children if he did not stop his escapades. But Rudy would not stop, Eric thought. He would certainly try to get back to Eric for the banana trick. “*Anyway*”, Eric thought, chasing away the dark cloud hovering over his mood, “*I have Jeeny now, and she will help me*”. He returned his attention back to Jeeny. His face brightened again. He had to find out about this brother of hers.

“Tell me Jeeny, tell me everything about this brother of yours, about Jemmy, I want to hear all of it.” Eric said, and sat down on the bed. As far as he knew, there should still be half a bag of crackers around here... ah, there they were, under the bed. He

picked up the bag, opened it and started feeding himself crackers, while Jeeny was feeding him more information.

Jeeny explained patiently. How it had been possible for any Genie to choose to be exiled in a lamp, a silver mine, a tree, or a book of magic for a certain time. How they would be given a tiny EverFire to keep them alive for as long as the EverFire would last, which was about 5 to 6000 years. How a Master Genie, like Jeeny's mom or dad could have cast a powerful spell over their hiding place so that her brother, if he had chosen to wait for her, would be sleeping most of the time, only to wake up if Jeeny had been found, freed and had called out to him, using his full name. How it might even be possible that her mom, queen of the elves of the south after all, could have used her very strong magic dust and her connections to some of the powerful family druids to connect a time chain to her brother's lamp. A magical chain that would reach all the way from the past, into Jeeny's and Eric's time now. Making it even possible for Jeeny and Jemmy to jump back into their own time. All they would need is a little help from a magician in this time, Eric's time.

Eric listened carefully. Slowly shaking his head. He tried to take it all in, make sense of it all. "Silver Mines?", "Time chains?" He was totally confused now. He was also out of crackers and needed something to drink now. Jeeny and Jemmy, another lamp, jumping back into the past, it was all getting a bit much for him. He ran into the bathroom, opened the faucet, drank deeply and returned to his room. Jeeny was still floating in front of his bookshelf, her face showed a keen interest in finding out what Eric thought now. Eric tried to clarify:

"So Jeeny, you mean... I mean... Are you saying that your brother might be out there, somewhere, inside a lamp just like yours, waiting to be called by you?" Eric asked.

"Mmhh", Jeeny's ghostlike head nodded, clearly pleased that Eric had understood.

“But, are you sure he would have done that for you? I mean, if you had not been found, he would be out there forever!”, Eric continued.

“No, I’m not sure he would have done it. Actually it would have been an absolutely crazy thing to do. And very risky, just like you said. In addition, if the UCWWDGORMA had found out about such an attempt to try a banned Genie, they would probably have banned my whole family into lamps: my mom, my dad, my sister and my 3 brothers. Then all 7 of us would be out here, somewhere, waiting for our EverFires to go out”

“Whoa, that really does not sound like thing I would risk”, Eric thought. “But how can we find out?” Eric asked, checking his watch. The lights-out command from upstairs was only 10 minutes away. He had to bring this discussion to some conclusion now, otherwise he would not find any sleep tonight.

“Well, we can try to find him right now. Using the same magic you used when you found me. Hmmm, that reminds me, how exactly did you find me?” asked Jeeny.

“Actually”, Eric answered, thinking hard. “I don’t think I found you. It was more like you found me.”

“Well, where is the Crystal Ball that you used to make our first thought connection?”

“Kristel who?”, Eric answered, “I don’t know her, who do you mean?”

“No, no, not a girl.” Jeeny giggled. “Crystal, as in Crystal Ball, my master, the thing, whatever you might call it, that you used to speak to me first.” Jeeny continued.

“Oh, oh, you mean my laptop computer. What about it?”

“ We could use your laptop computer, if that’s what you call crystal balls these days, to try to make a thought connection to my brother. We just have to call out his full name.”

“What is his full name?”, Eric asked, walking over to his desk where he kept the old battered laptop. He switched it on.

“Johan Elvensson Magnus Moonshadow Yggdrasil”, Jeeny said.

“Can you spell that?” Eric asked, waiting for the laptop to complete its very slow, very annoying start-up thingy.

Jeeny spelled the name:

J-o-h-a-n

E-l-v-e-n-s-s-o-n

M-a-g-n-u-s

M-o-o-n-s-h-a-d-o-w

Y-g-g-d-r-a-s-i-l

Eric typed in the letters, pressed the return key. Waited. Nothing. He typed the name again. Nothing.

“It’s not working Jeeny. Maybe his lamp has been destroyed. Or he never went inside a lamp in the first place. We don’t know. “

Jeeny looked sad. “Well”, she said, “It was worth a try”. Jeeny decided not to give up that easily. She would have to try again later. When she had learned more about laptop computers and all the other things Eric was using in his world. But first she needed to make sure she was allowed to stay outside, to learn more. “Eric?” she said.

“Yeah”, Eric answered, shutting down the laptop again. If his mom caught him using the computer this late in the evening, he would lose the right to play BattleZone again.

“Can I stay out tonight? I’d like to find out if I can read some of your books.”

“Ehh, sure, but does that make sense? How can you read my books, you don’t have any hands to turn the pages.”

“Ha ha” Jeeny laughed. “Don’t worry about that, I’m a Genie, aren’t I? I will figure something out. There must be a way to make some of my magic work in your world. It would be very useful to you, too, would it not?”

Eric thought about this. This would be really cool actually. If Jeeny could read books, what else would she be able to do next? This could help him prepare a defense strategy against Rudy. Sure, he would allow it.

“Okay”, he said. “But I will put you back inside when I get up in the morning, okay?”

“Jippee”, Jeeny laughed, “Thank you master, thank you so very much. I will have something interesting for you in the morning, I promise.”

“All right then, I have to go to bed soon. I assume you don’t need the lights on, right? After all, you are a Genie, right?”

Jeeny just smiled. A few seconds later, the Lights-Out-command came from upstairs. Eric ran to the bathroom, brushed his teeth quickly, switched off the light and went to bed. He tried to see through the darkness what Jeeny was doing, but he could not see anything at all. It just made him really tired. Eric fell asleep a few minutes later, dreaming of genies, lamps, museums and magic dust.

Chapter 3

An unexpected wake up call

Johan Elvensson Magnus Moonshadow Yggdrasil, J of Y, or short, Jemmy, Genie apprentice and brother to Jeeny, woke up with a start. What time was it? How long had he been sleeping? He checked the Time Crystal hanging on the wall of his cave, which was actually the hollow inside of a copper brooch, which was attached to a broad snake-leather belt, which in turn held together the ancient book of magic he had chosen as his hiding place. “What” he thought? “Not possible” He checked again. Yes, unbelievably, the time crystal showed 35976 moon cycles, 8 sun cycles, 24 hands and 3 fingers. It must be very late in the day, he thought, and a long long time from when he had been magically swooshed into this cave by his mom. He still recalled that shrinking feeling. He looked again. 35976. Jemmy had not ever counted that high ever before. The number itself meant nothing to him, it just seemed awfully big. He wondered what or who had woken him up. Hopefully it had been Jeeny. Then he would just need a little bit of Magic Dust to bring them both back to the real time. He checked the Time Chain his mother had installed. Yes, still there, a glowing row of silvery crystal beads leading to, then into and then disappearing through the wall of the cave. Good. At least he would be able to jump back if this turned out to be a false alarm. Jemmy concentrated and tried to open a view to the outside of the book. Nothing. Complete darkness. Not a sound either. He wondered where his book might have ended up. He might be inside a ship at the bottom of the deepest ocean, or in a cave underneath a volcano, for all he knew. So, back to more important matters. Who had called him? Was Jeeny out? He could not hear her now, no matter how hard he listened. Maybe he should try to call her? It could not hurt. He called his sister: *“Jasmine Elvira Elvensdotter Novina Yggdrasil, where are you? Answer me.”* Nothing. No response. He would keep trying for a while, then go back to sleep for a sun cycle. If Jeeny was really out of the lamp, she would clearly call him again. Then all he had to do was tell her about the time chain, ask her to find a powerful magician to cast the spell, or

installed in this house. He did not notice that the soft tug he had given to the main cable had opened up that wire just a little but more, so that the wire was now making closer contact with the metal box. Not enough contact to cause a short circuit or even a fire, but enough contact to connect the metal box into the electrical system the same way Jeeny's lamp was connected to the electrical system. But Sven could not know any of these things, and since he could not discover anything wrong with the connections, he decided to climb down the ladder again. He decided to call an electrician the next day. Sven switched the lights off, and then on again. Everything seemed to be okay now. Maybe, Sven thought, it had just been the effect of the thunderstorm moving in from the north. Sven closed the blinds of all the windows and decided to go to bed. Tomorrow would be a long day. He had agreed to teach a class about pet care for the 5th graders in the local school and he had to prepare for that. School was only 3 days away and he had not done anything to prepare his lecture.

3 miles from Sven's house, Eric had just fallen asleep. Jeeny had just begun to experiment with the 17 known spells that had to do with reading, learning or translating books. Of course neither Eric or Jeeny had any idea whatsoever that their attempt to contact Jemmy had caused the light in Sven Vitkapps house to flicker. That they had actually managed to wake Jemmy up from his 3000 year slumber. By spelling out the full name of Jemmy "Johan Elvensson Magnus Moonshadow Yggdrasil" Eric had produced enough magical wave energy that the name had been able to travel all the way from his laptop computer down the electrical cable, into the main fuse box of the house, to the underground cable providing electricity to all of his neighborhood, into the main electrical switch on main street, and onwards from there to Sven's house, where it had connected with the metal box and the book of magic stored inside. And that connection had woken Jemmy up, and had made the lights flicker for a few seconds. The only one that had a bit of a "feeling" that something might have happened was Jeeny. Right after Eric had written down Jemmy's full name in the computer, she had felt something. A tingling sensation. Not something she had felt before, but something that was strangely familiar nonetheless. She had just dismissed it and concentrated on modifying her book spells,

instead. She recombined the words of the old known spells in new ways, reversed them, said entire spells backwards. Even tried to make up entirely new spells. No effect. She could not even read the titles of the books that were written in bold but unfamiliar letters on the spines of the books. Most of the night had passed. She could see the first rays of morning light peeking through the drawn blinds of Eric's room. Jeeny was desperate. She could not disappoint her new master on her first day out. She thought "*there must be a way to use my magic in this world, I just have to keep on trying.*" She tried to remember her lessons. Oh, how she wished now that she had paid more attention in class. She remembered there had been one specific lesson about books and languages, especially about books in foreign lands. What was it she had said? Jeeny thought back hard. It slowly began coming back to her. Her teacher had written down a poem at the end of the lesson to summarize the most important points. And thank goodness Jeeny had at least memorized the poem. She had always liked poems, always been good with memorizing them. Anything to do with languages seemed to come quite easy to her. She recalled:

No matter where your trail will lead
You'll always find some book to read
To tell you what you need to know
'bout what to do and where to go
The writing, though, of foreign lands
will slip like sand through open hands
until you say the magic number
your eyes won't see as if in slumber
So count to 12 and ask yourself
which book to read and on what shelf
So choose a shelf and then a book
add the numbers and take a look.

"Yeah, that's it", Jeeny thought. That was the exact poem her teacher had written on the marble board. But what did it mean? "Count to 12 and ask yourself which book to read and on what

shelf?" Then she got it. Eric had 3 book shelves in his room. There must be at least two dozen books on each. She had to pick one and say the right number. Jeanny decided on the one thick book standing to the right of her lamp. She decided that this shelf was shelf number one. Then she counted the books from bottom to top, right to left. 34. Okay. 34 books plus 1 shelf was 35. She concentrated, and said: "35". She took a look. Nothing. The book was still standing there and she still had no idea what the title meant. "Hmm", she thought. Either she had made a mistake in memorizing the poem, or she had counted wrong. She tried again. This time she decided that this shelf was shelf number 3. She repeated the math. 3 plus 34 was 37. She said: "37". Still nothing. Then it dawned on her. Maybe she needed to count the other way. Not bottom to top, like they used to do in the library of Yggdrasil, maybe things were backwards in this time. Plus, what was she thinking? 37 was much more than 12! She needed to count to 12 and then start with 1 again. Jeeny repeated the exercise, this time counting top to bottom, left to right. The book she had chosen ended up being book number 11 on shelf number 3. 11 plus 3 made 14. So if she was only allowed to count to 12 and then started again at one, the number would be 2. Two would be the secret number, she was sure of it. Jeeny concentrated on the book she wanted to read and shouted: "Two"

Eric woke up with a start. Someone had yelled "two". Loud and clear. How could that be, so far he had heard Jeeny only in his mind, not with his ears. Had Jeeny discovered some new magic? Could she make herself heard now? That would be really useful, although it made it much more risky for her to be outside. What if someone had heard the "two". He would have to come up with an explanation. "Jeeny?", he whispered and switched on the light. It was 5:30 in the morning, way too early to get up. But the "two" had been so loud and clear, it would be a surprise if his dad had not woken up from it. "Uh oh", he already heard the "slippetty-slapetty-slap" of his dad's indoor sandals coming down the stair case. And his dad was probably inside these sandals. Jeeny was reading the second book Eric had borrowed from the school library: Wizards Spells and Magic Potions, a collection of short stories about the Magic Arts. The book was floating in thin air, pages slowly

turning as if pulled by an invisible hand. “Jeeny”, Eric hissed, “Put the book back, for heavens sake, my dad” Too late, the door opened and Henrik poked his head through the door.

“You okay kid?” he asked. “I heard you yell “Two” or something. Did you have a nightmare?”

“Ehh, I don’t know dad, I just woke up with a start, I heard the same thing. You know, it must have been that Genie that Sylvia was talking about. Maybe the Genie was doing some night time Genie-Math homework and had finally found the answer to one plus one?”

“Ha Ha Ha”, Eric’s dad laughed. “Good one, Eric, I would love to have your imagination. Now, please try to get some more sleep, it’s still very early in the morning. You probably had a nightmare, that’s all. Good night, sunny.”

“Good night, dad”, Eric replied and “*whew, that was close, you are sure right about that nightmare, dad*” he thought. He looked over to the lamp. He could still see Jeeny, now beaming with delight. The book, however, was back in its original spot on the shelf; as if nothing had happened. Clearly Jeeny had discovered how to make some of her magic work in Eric’s world.

“Good morning, Eric,” Jeeny said, in silent thought-language again. Obviously she had discovered that yelling numbers in the middle of the night was not quite the most appropriate thing to do in Eric’s world.

“Jeeny”, Eric whispered. He decided he would have to ask Jeeny to teach him the thought language trick so they could talk without being heard, too. “Whatever you have discovered, please wait until 8:30 when my mom and dad are out of the house. Then I will call Patrick and you can explain it to both of us, okay? I’m still very very tired!”

“Okay master, I’ll just read some of the books you have here, I can’t wait to find out more about the meaning of the crazy words you have been using. Sleep well.”

Eric turned around and put the pillow over his head. He still could not believe this was really happening. Some part of him was very excited about all of this, but there was also another part that hoped this was all just one long fantastic dream and he would wake up to a normal day without Genies, copper lamps and books floating in thin air.

Chapter 4 It's a long story

Eric woke up around 8:00 a.m. the next morning. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and checked on Jeeny. Yup, she was still out, still reading through his books. Jeeny seemed to be deeply lost in one of Eric's favorite science books called "How things work". Eric called out:

"Good morning, you book worm, don't you ever get tired? How are things coming along?"

"Good morning, master, no I don't get tired, this is much too much fun. You can't imagine what it feels like to be outside again after 3000 years. Things are just great. These books are fabulous, especially the pictures. I think you call them photos. We did not have pictures like this in our school books. Just very simple drawings. Not even the crystal balls we used were able to show us things with that much clarity. But, I have to admit, master, I'm still very confused by many things in this book. The masters that write your books seem to be using unknown words to explain other unknown words."

"Oh", Eric said. He did not get it. "How so?"

"Well, look right here master" said Jeeny. The book "How things work" floated over to Eric and opened itself to page 234. "Please read this passage" Jeeny asked. Eric noticed a passage that was highlighted by a shimmering purple sphere of light just hovering over the book. "Impressive", Eric thought. Jeeny was clearly learning how to get more spells to work in his time. He read aloud:

"A computer system consists of a central processing unit, a keyboard and a monitor. Accessories like a mouse can be attached to move the pointer around on the screen more easily." Eric looked at Jeeny. He did not get it, where was the problem? "I don't get it", he said to Jeeny, "where is the problem?"

“See master”, Jeeny continued, “I don’t know what a computer is, so I look up the explanation. But the explanation uses more words I don’t know, such as processing unit, keyboard and monitor. And the words I know, like mouse and screen seem to be used in completely different ways. And when I look up one of the words I don’t know, I get more words I don’t know. So I keep going round and round in circles. It is very hard. How do you kids learn anything these days? Why can’t you people call things just by their proper names?”

“Like what?” Eric smiled. This was going to be interesting.

“Well, as far as I’m concerned, a computer is nothing more than a crystal ball. You can ask it questions. You can ask it to remember things for you. And you can use it to show images of things to other people. It’s just that for your Crystal Ball, the thing that you call a laptop computer, you have to use this keyboard thing to type in your commands. Us Genies and even some of the regular people were able to speak to Crystal Balls 3000 years ago. I really don’t think you people have made all that much progress in 3000 years. It seems to me that you have just managed to make things so much more complicated. Now you need thousands of books to explain it all. And then ten-thousand more books are needed to explain what is written in the fist one-thousand books. Don’t you agree, master?”

Eric laughed. “Fair enough, Jeeny, fair enough. You can call my computer a crystal ball if you like. As long as we agree on the words I think we will have a great time. Hey, I’m going to play a round of BattleZone 3000, before Patrick comes over at 8:30. Wanna watch me?”

“BattleZone? That sounds dangerous, Eric! Do you want me to protect you?”

Eric thought. Now this would be something. Maybe he could ask Jeeny to help him go past level 8, reach level 9, or even 10 before school started! He would be king of the hill. Not even Patrick had come that far yet. He said to Jeeny: “Sure, just watch the game

and tell me if you can help me”. Eric fired up the laptop. He started BattleZone and typed in his user name and password:

Eric Emberson
Wizard

“Hey”, Jeeny called, “I felt that! Is this how you called me the first time?”

“I guess so” said Eric. It seemed like ages ago now that he had seen the first rhyming riddle on his screen. What had it said again? Oh yeah. Eric said in a solemn tone:

“Words of wisdom, words of light, Follow the seeker, avoid the fight!” He chuckled. Jeeny laughed too, and said:

“Oh, you remember! I will never forget this either. I wanted to impress you with my Future-Eye trick. I hope it helped, master!”

Eric felt his cheekbone. He was still a bit sore from the straight hook he had collected from Rudy. “No”, he said “it actually did not help me because I had no idea someone was sending me messages about my future. But the next messages were very useful. I was able to avoid Rudy two times in a row. The second time he learned a bit of a lesson I hope.” He could still recall Rudy’s face as he skated by on a banana peel, the sound of his nose connecting with the red cylinder of the fire extinguisher with a resounding “Denggggg”.

“I’m sorry about the first time, but I’m glad it worked out the second and third time, master” Jeeny said. She continued: “I think I’d like to know more about BattleZone now. Please start, I’m so curious to find out how I can help you!”

Eric started the game. Tantor was still his archenemy, even on level 8. At this level, however, Tantor could launch flying goblins at him. The goblins were nasty creatures with fangs the size of hunting knives and carrying fishing nets that could drain your energy reserves very quickly if you got caught in one of them. Pretty soon

Eric was lost in the game. He had completely forgotten about Jeeny and was only focused on sharpening his sword, collecting energy crystals, and avoiding the energy drain nets and the cross bow arrows Tantor was constantly shooting at him. All over sudden he heard Jeeny's voice:"

"Master, why don't you use your shield? And you don't seem to want to use your cloak either. Why?"

"Shield? Cloak?" Eric thought, what was Jeeny talking about? He said: "What are you talking about Jeeny? I don't have a shield or a cloak in this game. "

"Yes you do", Jeeny said. The game you are playing was called Light and Dark in my times. We played it all the time at school using our crystal balls. The game was actually there to teach us about the forces of the dark that might come back some day to try and conquer Yggdrasil. All of the characters and moves you are using are almost identical to what I know. Whoever created this game must either be a very old Genie, Magician or Wizard, or he or she must have found a really old book somewhere. "

Eric's head had started to spin. "What?", he thought and "what?" How could this be? The game he had been playing, more than 3000 years old? Impossible. But then again, so many things had been happening that had seemed impossible just a few weeks ago. Eric got up from his desk to walk over to his book shelves where he had stored the carton the game had come in. He read the text on the back of the box to find out who had made the game. There. It said:

BattleZone 3000, Copyright 2000, UltraGame productions. Story by Lisa R. Dggy.

"Lisa R. Dggy" Eric thought, what kind of name was that? He read the name to Jeeny. Jeeny listened to the name, then smiled and laughed out loud.

"What's so funny? Can I laugh too?" Eric said a bit annoyed.

“Oh master, don’t you see? Just spell the name backwards.”

Eric got out a pencil and wrote the name on the back of an old piece of paper.

YGGD R. ASIL

The meaning of what he had written down hit him like a bucket of cold water. “Yggdrasil” he shouted. “Does this mean ...”

“Yes master, it means that someone from my clan is still around, making some things happen on my behalf even in this time. Maybe even my mom and dad. There is hope, after all. Now I even believe that Jemmy is here with me. Try to contact him again, master please? Please? “

Eric had to sit down. This was getting a bit too much for this old thinker. It had gone on vacation again. He could not put together a clear thought. He did not even pay attention to BattleZone where Tantor’s goblins were busy throwing more nets over him had already begun to take away all of his energy crystals. Pretty soon he would see the familiar “game over-play again” message appear on the screen. He pressed the <Escape> key to stop the game. Then he heard the chime of the doorbell. “*Patrick, thank goodness*”, Eric thought. “He will figure this out, no problem” Eric said to himself. He went upstairs to fetch his buddy. Boy would he in for a surprise.

Patrick had listened to the whole story without asking a single question. He had just sat there, taking it all in, making notes in his workbook, pulling the skin of his forehead into small wrinkles now and then. After 15 minutes, Eric and Jeeny had told the whole story. About Jeeny’s theory that her brother might be here. That she had been able to make some magic work in this time, even without the use of magic dust, and without the help of an experienced magician. And that they had proof that the Yggdrasil clan was still around, somewhere, writing stories for game software. After they had finished, Patrick had jumped up from the sofa, and said:

“Hang on a minute, I’ll be right back, I have to take a look at something”. Patrick had sprinted upstairs and had then run back to his own house, to look at his own package of BattleZone 3000. On his package there was a different message. It said:

BattleZone 3000, Copyright 2000, UltraGame productions. Story by Lisa Damorian.

Patrick ran back to Eric’s house and said:

“You have a different version of the game. I checked my package. On my game, Lisa Damorian did the story, not Lisa R. Dggy. That explains why contact with Jeeny only works from your computer, not from mine. It still does not explain why Jeeny thinks the game is exactly like the game she played with Crystal Balls 3000 years ago. Well here is what I think.” Eric was glad. Patrick’s detective brain had begun working again. Soon things would be much clearer. Patrick took a deep breath and launched into one of his famous 1-2-3 speeches that had earned him the respect of Mrs. Hansson at school. “(1)” Patrick began, “there is clear evidence that at least part of Jeeny’s clan is alive, using some kind of magic to help her. (2) We know that it is quite possible that her brother Jemmy is waiting in a bottle, in a lamp, or in a book or something else. If that is so, then he is desperately waiting to be contacted by her. (3) We know that Jeeny has begun to make her magic work in our time so it is entirely possible that Jeeny could get her body back or even return to her own time. Do you all agree, with 1-2-3?”

Both Eric and Jeeny nodded vigorously. The last sentence had even been in rhyme. Patrick had always had such a way with words. Patrick continued: “So, I think we should try to contact Jimmy and see if we can get him here as well. To Genies are better than one, I think. They might even make up for the fact that we are no Magicians.”

Again, vigorous nods from both Jeeny and Eric. Patrick sat down in front of Eric’s computer, looked at this notebook and typed:

Johan Elvensson Magnus Moonshadow Yggdrasil

Nothing happened. Patrick typed the names in again; this time with <returns> between the names.

Johan
Elvensson
Magnus
Moonshadow
Yggdrasil

The screen went gray. And so did the faces of Patrick and Eric. “Whoa”, they both said at the same time. One surprise was chasing the other here. Only Jeeny beamed with joy. One by one, as if with great effort, the following letters appeared on the screen.

H
He
Hel
Hell
Hello
Hello t
Hello th
Hello the
Hello ther
Hello there

Jeeny floated over to the computer and whispered something Eric and Patrick could not quite hear. It seemed to work, however, because the words had started to appear more rapidly now.

Hello there sister of mine, what took you so long? My time crystal tells me that I have been sleeping for 35976 moon cycles. How can I find you? I have a time chain here with me, so we can go back any time you like. Please talk to me.

Jeeny said to Patrick who was still sitting in front of the computer. “Patrick, can you please tell my brother that he can come here through this crystal ball. All he has to do is focus on me and follow

his thoughts all the way here. He can stay in my lamp, the EverFire should last us both until we have figured out what to do next.

Patrick typed:

You can come here through this crystal ball. Focus on me and follow your thoughts all the way to this place. You can stay in my lamp, the EverFire should last us both until we have figured out what to do next.

The screen blanked, went back to gray.

Fine, just fine, sister of mine

Eric and Patrick watched, spellbound, what happened next. The electric cable leading from Eric's old laptop to the wall outlet started shimmering in a faint purple. It then began to vibrate very slightly and then seemed to widen just a bit, for just a little while. Then, in a puff of purple smoke the grinning ghost of an about 9-year old boy appeared over the computer.

“Greetings Jeeny”, said Jemmy. “I have not seen you in a while. Have you gotten into trouble with the UCWWDGORMA yet? And who are these two? Are there no real magicians around here?”

“Slow down, brother”, Jeeny said, laughing. She was so pleased to see another of her kind after all these years. “Let me introduce you. This is Eric Emberson, my master. That is Patrick Mertens, his best friend. These two actually pulled me out of a storage cellar. Without them, I would still be practicing the same old 147 spells until my EverFire ran out.”

Jemmy nodded at Eric, then at Patrick. He said to Eric:

“Respect, respect my young master. You must be the E of E that mom was able to add into the prison spell. We did not even think that is was possible for a mortal to get through the barrier spells. How did you manage to come up with the name?”

“Easy”, Patrick said, “we just kept trying until we got it right, after all, that’s what computers are for.

“Computers?” Jemmy asked with a frown on his face.

Jeeny laughed. “Come on Jemmy, let’s go into my cave, I’ll tell you everything. I’ll even treat you to some of my EverFire. It’s a long story, brother!” Jeeny was also desperate to tell Jemmy that she had found some magic dust, or something that seemed to work just like magic dust. The dust that collected on the window of what Eric called a Television was full of energy. When she got close to the Television, some of the dust rubbed off on her image and made her powers stronger. But no need to tell Eric about this. She turned to Eric: “Can you please send me back in, I’ll pull Jemmy along.”

Eric was just staring at Jemmy. Patrick elbowed him. “Ouch” Eric said, and then “Oh yeah ... ehhm ... right” Eric walked over to his bookshelf, rubbed the lamp, said “Yggdrasil” and watched in awe how two ghosts disappeared into the old fish-oil lamp from Copenhagen. In his mind he kept repeating what Jeeny had said to her brother.

“It’s a long story, brother!”

It sure was. How was he ever, ever going to be able to explain all this to a normal human being? If it hadn’t been for Patrick, who gave him a slap on the back, Eric’s mind would have probably gone missing in La-La-land for a while.

“Come on Eric” said Patrick “We have plans to make.”

Eric nodded, shut down his laptop and followed Patrick upstairs to start working on the plan. What were they going to do next?

Chapter 5, Double shocker

Patrick and Eric spent all afternoon talking, planning, discussing, scheming, even arguing sometimes about what to do next. It annoyed Eric that they had begun arguing. They had never argued before. But this was simply too important. Patrick had said that it would be best to send Jeeny back. She did not belong here. But Eric did not want to let her go. How often do you get the chance to own a real Genie in this day and age? If he let her go, he would regret it for the rest of this life. The discussion went on and on. They did not even notice that Anita Emberson, Eric's mom had come back and had begun to listen in on the discussion. What were they talking about? Were they fighting over the same girl? Was it not a bit early for two ten-year-olds to have fits of jealousy? Jeannie had not even moved here yet! What was there to argue about? Anita needed to find out more and continued to listen:

“You just can't keep Jeeny to yourself. She has other people she cares about”, Patrick fumed.

“Oh yeah” Eric steamed back. “Like who, people like you? What do you know about Jeeny? I was the one that found her!”

“Whoa, whoa, I don't think so, buster! I think that she found you. And if I had not figured out her riddles for you, you would still be staring at that gray screen of yours scratching your head.”

“Oh yeah, maybe you need a little lesson in respect my friend, brains aren't everything you know.” Eric shouted.

At that point, Anita decided to step in. The last thing she wanted was a wrestling match in the living room. The kids really seemed like they needed a cooling off period.

“Both of you”, Anita shouted from the kitchen. “Calm down. There is no reason to get that upset a about a girl that has not even moved here yet. If you don't cut it out, Eric, I will cut off your

email access again and then you can see how you can talk to Jeannie. Okay?”

Eric and Patrick looked at each other. “Whoops” they said in unison. “How much has she heard?” said Eric quietly. “I have no idea” Patrick mouthed back. Suddenly, there was no argument any more. They had to continue the discussion some other time, now they needed to make sure Anita did not find out what was really going on. Eric decided to use the full-frontal-truth-method again.

“Okay mom”, Eric yelled. “This is not about Jeannie, the email girl. This is about the real Genie in the lamp downstairs. She has now found her brother who has moved in with her. And her brother has brought a time chain that they can use to jump 3000 years back in time to join her family again. She misses her clan you know. After all her mom is Queen of the Elves of the South.” Eric looked at Patrick, winking with his left eye. “Watch this” he whispered.

“Eric”, came the annoyed voice of his mom. She poked her head around the corner to look at Eric. “Don’t you try to pull my leg, okay? I’m really impressed with your active imagination but this is no laughing matter. I think this is pretty important stuff. Although I believe it is a bit early for you kids to start arguing about girl friends, I understand this is a topic that you want to work out amongst yourselves, okay? I just don’t want to hear you guys yelling at each other any more. And I will certainly not see any fist fights, not even a wrestling match between the two of you. Use your words. Keep your voices down. If you need a referee for the discussion, I’d be glad to help out. So, calm down now. You guys want some ice cream?” Anita’s head had disappeared in the kitchen again.

Eric and Patrick looked at each other. “Pheew” they sighed and exchanged the victory handshake: palm, palm, fist, palm, fist. “Well done” whispered Patrick. “Let’s have some ice cream, then we can talk some more over at my house, okay?” Eric nodded and they both went to the kitchen to grab some of the good stuff Anita had brought back from the super market.

Eric and Patrick talked some more, but did not come to a clear conclusion. They decided to sleep over it and meet again the next morning. When Eric came back to his house around 6:00 p.m. he had to deal with a double shock. When he went back to his room, he saw that two things had changed. The lamp had been unplugged and moved up one shelf. In the outlet, where the lamp had been plugged in, a fancy new extension plug, the one with a glowing red power switch on one side. In the extension plug, a cable leading to his desk. Next to his desk, a brand new computer. No sign of the beat up laptop. On the desk, a note from his dad.

"Surprise, Surprise, Eric, I know you were hoping to get a new machine for your birthday. Well, better late than never. This is a great machine, very similar to the one I have at work. It even runs the newest version of BattleZone 3000. Have fun! I hope this will make your return to school a bit easier.

Signed Mom and Dad.

"No!" Eric thought. Where was his laptop? But he had an even more horrifying thought. What if his dad had freed Jeeny and Jemmy by accident when unplugging the lamp? All his dad would have had to do was read the engraved name, touch the lamp, and the two genies would have popped out. Invisible to him, but free to do what they wanted since their master was not around. And then, who knows what could have happened. Maybe Jemmy had just convinced Jeeny to come back home with him? He had to find out. Eric went over to the lamp, rubbed it and said "Yggdrasil". Nothing. Eric plugged the lamp into the wall outlet, to connect the electricity, repeated the spell. Still nothing. "No, no, no, no, this can't be" He tried again and again. No result. Jeeny was gone. He had not even had a chance to properly get to know Jemmy. What was he going to do now? Who was going to help him against Rudy VanDerClaas? The Yggdrasil siblings were probably already back in their clan house, castle, cave or whatever, celebrating the return of the lost son and daughter. Eric sat down on the bed, devastated, burying his head in his hands. Suddenly he had an idea. "Wait", he thought, "they might have gone back to Jemmy's hiding place instead, to get the

time chain. Maybe Jemmy and Jeeny had to jump back from there? Jemmy had not mentioned that he had brought the time chain with him when he had popped out of Eric's laptop computer. They might have gone to Jemmy's hiding place in the book or magic, and then Eric's dad had unplugged the lamp and the old laptop at the same time. They might be stuck there now, with nowhere to go. Eric had to get his old laptop back to try to contact Jemmy. But how? Eric wanted his laptop back, but he also liked his new machine. Eric had waited for this a long long time. He had to think about something. He did not want to end up with nothing at all: No genie, no laptop, no big computer. He decided to call Patrick. They talked for a few minutes and then, again, as usual, Patrick had the saving idea. He said:

“Just tell them that part of your homework is still stored on the laptop and that you need it back. It's even true, remember the work we did before the summer break?”

“That's it” Eric thought. “That is the solution”. He ran upstairs to talk to his dad. 10 minutes later he was back downstairs, now completely devastated. His dad had already given the laptop to the used computer hardware store on the corner of Main Street and Strandvägen, the street they were living on. He had asked the man running the store to try and sell it for him. And now it was past 6:00 and the store had closed at 6:00. And tomorrow was Saturday, and the store was probably not even open on weekends. Everything seemed lost. Eric was completely, and utterly destroyed and went to bed early. Maybe something would come to him in his dreams. You never knew.

Upstairs Henrik Emberson was shaking his head at Anita. “I don't understand kids” he said. You think you are doing them the greatest favor in the world, giving them the computer they have been begging you for, and then they want their old beaten up clunkers back. He did not even say thank you! Do you have any idea what is behind this?” Anita was scratching her head. She really had no explanation at all. This was completely unlike Eric. Could it be that this Jeannie person had really confused him that much? She decided to tell Henrik the whole story. Henrik listened carefully and said:

“I don’t remember exactly how I felt when I was ten. But girls were not that important to me at the time. I think I was more interested in my matchbox sets and my Beatles albums. But I’ll talk to Eric tomorrow and see what I can find out.”

“Yeah, please do, Henrik,” said Anita, I’m a bit concerned that what is really going on here is a bit deeper than we expect.”

“We’ll see, we’ll see.” said Henrik. “School starts on Monday and will distract Eric a little bit.” But he was not that sure any more.

Chapter 6, Back to School

The next morning, Eric got up early to run down to the used computer hardware store. He checked the sign. Thank goodness, it would open at 10:00 a.m. The time until then seemed like ages to Eric. How he wished he had a spell like Jeeny to make the time pass more quickly. He checked his watch every 10 minutes. But as coincidence and bad luck would have it sometimes, his mom asked him to help her in the back yard just 3 minutes before 10. He finished rolling up the garden hose as fast as possible and sprinted to the computer store as if he wanted to break the world speed record in the 100 meter dash. He arrived at 10:03. He could not believe his eyes. In the store. Rudy-the Rude-VanDerClaas. Looking at his laptop computer. Taking out his wallet. Paying the man behind the counter. “No, no, no, no, this can’t be!” Eric wailed. But it was too late. Rudy came out of the store, Eric’s laptop under his arm, saw Eric and said: “Aaahhh, loser-boy! Good to see you again. Too bad I can’t beat you up right here and now. But I’ll get to you soon, school starts again on Monday. I would start collecting band-aids if I were you. When I’m through with you, your face will look like a pizza. This time, no banana peel will help you. So long, Emberson. Ha Ha Ha Ha.”

Eric walked back home, downtrodden. It seemed like he had lost everything. He did not even feel like stopping by at Patrick’s house. Not even Patrick’s detective brain would be able to help him out now. Eric arrived back home, and decided to play some BattleZone to get his mind focused on something different. He fired up the computer, and started the new version of BattleZone. He looked at the back of the box.

Story by Lisa Damorian.

Something dawned on him. His glance went over to the shelf, where the old box of BattleZone was stored. Could it be? Yes! The old box was still in there. He walked over to the shelf, ripped open the box. Yes again! The old CD was still inside. He rechecked the box:

Story by Lisa R. Dggy.

“Yes, yes, yes” he said. Maybe this would work. He installed the game impatiently. The installation program asked him for his first name:

Eric

The program asked him for this last name

Emberson

The program asked him for his password

Wizard

There. It was done. Eric crossed his fingers and hoped for a gray screen. Nothing happened. But then again, when had the first message appeared? First he had beaten Tantor a number of times and had then left the game. Then he had started the computer up again the next morning to continue the battle. Eric decided to replay everything exactly as it had been on his old laptop. He started up the game and fought like a tiger. He advanced through the levels as if he had been playing nothing but BattleZone for the last 3000 years. He arrived at the point in the battle with Tantor on level 6 where his mom had told him to shut off the computer. He remembered it clearly. The set up. The number of energy crystals. Everything was as 6 weeks ago. He hit the Escape key. Shut the computer down. Started it up again. Typed in the magic words. “Please, please make this work” he whispered.

Eric
Emberson
Wizard

The screen went gray. “Yesssssss” he wailed. If his mom had seen him now she would have probably packed him into the car and driven him to the family doctor to have his brain checked for La la

disease. Yellow letters began to appear on the screen. No riddles, just a long message from Jeeny.

Hello Eric, I'm sorry we had to leave so soon. Jemmy said that the time chain would only last for a short time after he had woken up. I had to make a decision. As much as I enjoyed being with you and learning about your time, I really missed my friends and family. Jemmy told me how much work it had been and how high the risk had been to even try to rescue me from the exile. So when your dad accidentally freed us from the lamp, and took away your crystal ball, we decided to act very quickly. We pulled together all of our magic powers, using some of the magic dust on your TV, and then called on the time chain to bring us back. Before we left, though, Jemmy helped to set up this connection between your time and mine, using the time chain and the Öresund lamp. And I wrote this message to you, hoping that you would find it in the special BattleZone game the Yggdrasil clan had prepared for you.

The screen went blank, then changed to a dark purple. This was new. Eric had not seen that color before.

Hi Eric, I'm glad you found my letter. I'm back in the Yggdrasil house, hiding in the cellar so the UCWWDGORMA don't find out that I have escaped. My aunt Novina will come and teach me in 2 sun cycles, so we will be going to school together. Isn't this nice? My family are standing around my crystal ball that I'm using to send this message to you. They all say hello, and thank you, especially my mom and dad. They are so grateful for what you have done. Oh, and by the way, of course we have a gift for you. Since I can still use my Future-Eye trick, I can see things in your time. Things are becoming more and more clear all the time now that I have my mom to help me again. If you have any question about the future, feel free to ask. Just make sure you are using

this game so I know you are calling upon me. And remember. The rules have not changed. Bye bye master, maybe one day we meet again. Signed;

Jasmine Elvira Elvensdotter Novina Yggdrasil

Eric saw the screen go blank, and then become gray again. A new message appeared. He remembered the lines very well. That very same message from Jeeny had told him about the rules of the question and answer game he had learned to play with Jeeny when they had first met.

Proceed with your questions, but one at a time
For I see the future, but can only talk rhyme
There are some conditions, I have to explain
You may not seek answers that fortunes would gain

Eric's eyes clouded up with tears when he saw this message. He did not know if he should laugh or cry. He was so sad, that Jeeny was gone, he would really, really miss her. At the same time he still had her, he could still talk to her. She would still send him rhyming riddles about the future. Not to make him rich or to gain a fortune. Nothing had changed here. But to help him with the important things. Like, avoiding the next battle with Rudy the Rude.

He typed in his first question:

“How can I avoid the next attack by Rudy the Rude?”

The screen went blank, then purple again. Jeeny seemed to have heard his message, performed her Future-eye trick and had sent the answer. The screen read:

Master my master, please hear my advice
The game will be open but will have a price
The floor will be slippery on that special day
If you bring your shield, you won't be his prey

“Great, just great”, Eric thought, another riddle. “I have no idea what this is supposed to mean. But thank goodness, I still have Patrick, master brain of the universe.” Eric was going to call Patrick right away. He would not believe that they all would start school together this year.

Epilogue

Patrick had come back from his first day as a 5th grader beaming with joy. Sylvia Martens was bursting with curiosity. Patrick was whistling again, just like last time when he and Eric had come back from their mystery trip to Copenhagen. Something wonderful must have happened again. She needed to find out.

“Hey big brother?”

“Yes Sylvia, what’s up?”

“I was wondering, you seem really happy again. Is it about school?”

“Oh-Oh.” Patrick thought. Sylvia was on to something again. He was glad the Jeeny / Genie thing had taken such an elegant ending and Sylvia had stopped bugging him about that.

“Yes, we were able to avoid Rudy the Rude again today.”

“How?”

“Well it’s a long story, too hard to explain. You kind of had to be there to understand what happened.”

“I want to know, I want to know”, Sylvia whined.

“Okay, I’ll tell you. You know that Rudy is still trying to beat up on Eric because of what happened last school year?”

“Yeah, so?”

“Eh, well, this year Rudy tried to get his revenge early on. So after soccer practice, Rudy and his henchmen had set up a trap for Eric.”

“A trap, what kind of trap?” Sylvia asked.

Patrick was looking for words. He did not want to lie about how they could have known about the trap. She would be on to him like that. He snipped his fingers.

“Why are you snipping, Patrick. What kind of trap was it?”

Patrick remembered the scene really well. Eric had done such a great job interpreting that riddle to plan his defense. “Come here” said Patrick. Then he told Sylvia everything. That Rudy had waited in the dressing room with his henchmen. That he had planned to spray Eric with the water hose when he came into the dressing room after the game, to blind him, so Eric would not see that the floor had been made extremely slippery with soap. Rudy had hoped that Eric would fall down, so that he would be easy prey for him and his henchmen. Later they would have blamed the bruises on Eric’s body on the slippery floor alone. Patrick told Sylvia that Eric had known about this planned attack because he was still talking to his Genie friend in the Yggdrasil house 3000 years back in time. That he had brought his umbrella to act as his shield against the water hose. When Rudy had started spraying him, he had just flipped open his umbrella. Instead of blinding him, the water had splashed off into all directions, blinding Rudy and his henchmen instead of Eric and squirting ice cold water over the wall into the teacher’s separate dressing room. Mr. Bohlman, the soccer coach had come running around the corner to see what’s going on, had slipped on the soapy floor and had scooted like a freight train right into Rudy and his henchmen. Mr. Bohlman’s 200 pounds of raw muscle had bowled the four kids right over and all 5 of them had ended up on the floor. Eric had just folded up his umbrella and had quietly disappeared in the dressing room next door. After that, he had just seen how Mr. Bohlman had escorted Rudy and his 3 musketeers to the office of the principal. Strike one. On day one. It would just be a matter of time before Rudy would be kicked out of this school. And if Eric continued with his riddle guessing, there was no way Rudy would ever score a hit on Eric again.

Sylvia had listened to the whole story. It had sounded just as strange as the first Genie story Patrick had told her before the summer break. She sighed, and said:

“You know, big brother, this was a very, very nice story. I believe the Rudy part, the umbrella part and the soap part, even the Mr. Bohlman part. But next time you are telling me why you are in such a good mood, just forget about the Genie parts. I think I have learned my lesson. Okay?”

“ Sure Sylvia, I’ll do that”, Patrick said. Sylvia huffed, puffed and steamed off to her room.

Patrick exhaled. Great. He had known that old full-frontal-truth-trick he had learned from Eric would work again.

Truth was stranger than fiction. It really was.
